

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

The Future of Fusion Centers: Potential Promise and Dangers

April 1, 2009 (WASHINGTON) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Intelligence, Information Sharing & Terrorism Risk Assessment Subcommittee hearing entitled “The Future of Fusion Centers: Potential Promise and Dangers”:

“If we don’t get the privacy and civil liberties piece at fusion centers right, we’ll see more abuses like those revealed last summer in Maryland and just last month in North Texas.

Homeland security intelligence and fusion centers can’t be in the business of assumptions – assuming every person: wearing a trench coat is a robber; loitering on a corner is a drug dealer; or taking a picture of a monument is a terrorist.

Put simply, fusion centers “done right” are not about keeping tabs on innocent people engaged in innocent activities. Nor are they about targeting individuals based on race, ethnicity or religious belief.

Fusion centers should be about creating intelligence that tells first preventers what to “be on the lookout” for. That’s information that will help keep Americans safe, without violating our First Principles. Keeping that covenant is a big part of ensuring fusion centers are “done right”, but it’s not the only part.

Our witnesses today will describe: how fusion centers are promoting more and better information sharing, what needs work, and how we should move ahead with our freedoms and liberties intact.”

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Dena Graziano or Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives

Committee on Homeland Security

H2-176, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515

Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499

<http://homeland.house.gov>